



OFFICE OF THE CHILD ADVOCATE (OCA) **THE CHILD ADVOCATE**

The Child Advocate for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is an influential leadership role dedicated to ensuring that the child-serving executive agencies deliver timely, safe, and effective services. The Child Advocate ensures that children in the care of the Commonwealth receive services that promote safety, dignity and well-being. This critical position is charged by the Legislature with examining on a system-wide basis the care and services that executive branch agencies provide children, and advises the public and those at the highest levels of state government about how to improve services to children and families. The Child Advocate must be a highly experienced and respected professional who can provide leadership, influence high-level decision makers and have a broad vision for the child welfare system. The Child Advocate is a leader to those both inside and outside of state government and is a voice for children experiencing adversity and/or affected by trauma, working to ensure their health, safety and opportunity.

In this role, the Child Advocate will shape public policy, collaborate with key government and community stakeholders, and lead public dialogue on critical issues affecting children. The position requires exceptional expertise in child welfare, juvenile justice, and public advocacy, as well as proven leadership and communication skills. The Child Advocate will oversee a talented team, manage investigations and reports, and advise senior officials, legislators, and the public. This is an essential leadership position for a dynamic professional ready to drive meaningful change in the systems that protect children and strengthen families.

Duties and Responsibilities (these duties are a general summary and not all inclusive):

- Provide overall leadership, direction, and management of the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA), ensuring alignment with its mission and statutory responsibilities.
- Serve as the primary spokesperson for the OCA in interactions with the Governor's Office, Legislature, Cabinet Secretaries, agency leadership, stakeholders, the media, and the public.
- Appear and testify before legislative committees, participate in public events, and represent the OCA in meetings across public and private sectors.
- Develop and recommend legislative and policy changes to improve services for children and families across the Commonwealth.
- Lead the development and implementation of the OCA's strategic plan and guide major projects and initiatives.
- Promote public awareness and understanding of the OCA's work through education, community engagement, and outreach to constituent groups.
- Oversee the preparation and publication of the OCA Annual Report, ensuring accurate and transparent reporting on the office's activities and findings.
- Oversee review of Critical Incident Reports (CIRs) and reports of abuse and neglect in out-of-home settings, and operation of Helpline.
- Determine which critical incidents to investigate and oversee investigations and publication of investigative reports.
- Build and maintain collaborative relationships with key partners across child welfare, juvenile justice, behavioral health, education, and judicial systems.
- Manage and supervise OCA staff, including the Deputy Director and Counsel, with responsibility for recruitment, development, and retention of staff.

Preferred Qualifications:

- Master's degree in a related field such as public administration, social work, public health, behavioral health, healthcare administration, human resource management or business administration; Minimum ten (10) years' experience in areas related to child welfare and juvenile justice.
- Professional degree (and relevant licensure/board admissions) and professional experience relevant to that degree (e.g., J.D., M.D., Ph.D., M.S.W. or equivalent)
- Extensive leadership experience in child welfare, child advocacy, behavioral health, legal services, human services systems, or related nonprofit organizations.
- Proven ability to work independently and impartially, with sound judgment, integrity, and objectivity, in compliance with statutory duties.
- Knowledge of trauma-informed practices and a deep understanding of the needs of children and families interacting with state systems.
- Understanding of applicable state and federal regulations, policies, and procedures.
- Demonstrated ability to analyze complex issues and develop practical, result-oriented solutions.
- Experience engaging with high-level state government officials, agency leadership, legislators, and the public.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, with experience presenting to a variety of diverse audiences.
- Ability to manage multiple priorities and meet deadlines in a fast-paced environment.
- Commitment to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the workplace.
- Familiarity with Massachusetts child-serving agencies, the landscape of services and supports available to children in the Commonwealth as well as the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) agencies, programs, and priorities.
- Proficiency with Microsoft Office Suite, data management tools, and relevant HR or project management systems.

About the Office of the Child Advocate:

The Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) is an independent office established by Massachusetts law (M.G.L. Chapter 18C) to ensure that children receiving services from the Commonwealth are protected, treated with dignity and respect, and have access to effective supports. The OCA's core mission is to work to improve the services provided by child-serving executive agencies across the state.

The OCA examines policies, practices, and incidents across executive branch agencies to identify system-wide improvements. It conducts investigations, responds to complaints, issues public reports, and offers policy recommendations to the Governor, Legislature, and state agencies. The Office serves as a resource for families and the public, ensuring transparency and accountability in how the Commonwealth supports and protects children experiencing adversity and/or affected by trauma. Operating autonomously, the OCA plays an essential role in advancing equity, safety, and positive outcomes for children and families across Massachusetts.

Pre-Hire Process:

A tax & background check will be completed on the recommended candidate as required by the regulations set forth by the Human Resources Division prior to the candidate being hired.

Education, licensure and certifications will be verified in accordance with the Human Resources Division's Hiring Guidelines.

Education and license/certification information provided by the selected candidate(s) is subject to the Massachusetts Public Records Law and may be published on the Commonwealth's website.